



# Food Allergy Labelling and Accommodation on Non-chain Restaurant Websites and Menus in Toronto, 2023-2024



Rawan Nahle<sup>1</sup>, Dr. Ian Young<sup>1</sup>

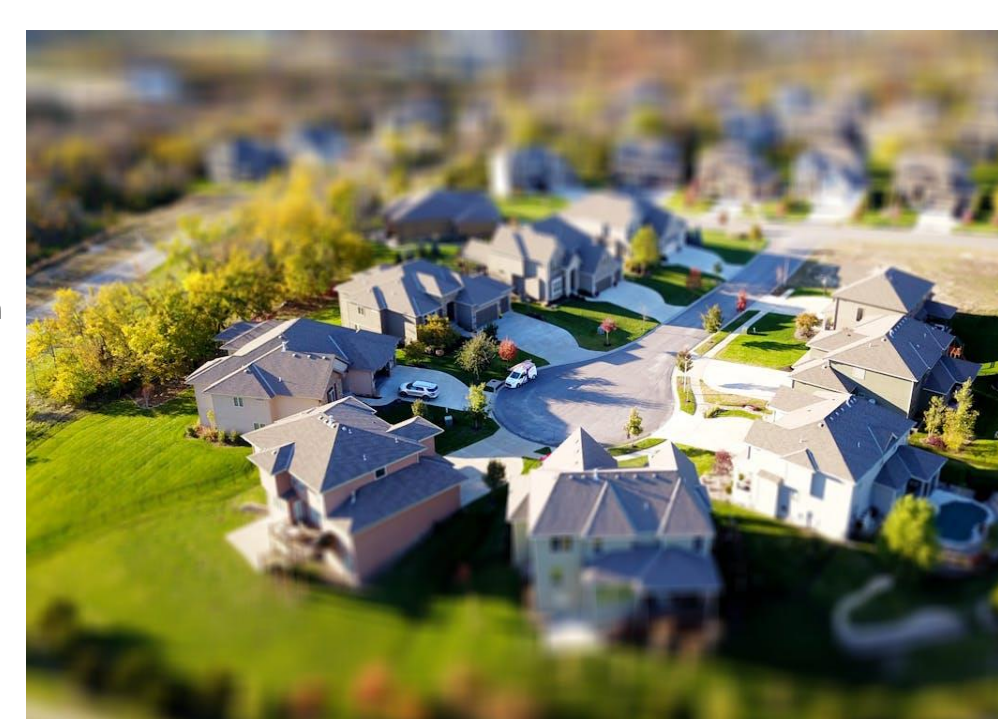
<sup>1</sup>School of Occupational and Public Health, Toronto Metropolitan University, Toronto, ON, Canada

## Introduction

- Food allergies are immune responses that occur upon exposure to specific foods<sup>1</sup>
- Around 7.5% of Canadians have at least one food allergy<sup>2</sup>
- Food allergies should be taken seriously as exposure to allergens can result in serious fatalities<sup>3</sup>

## Literature

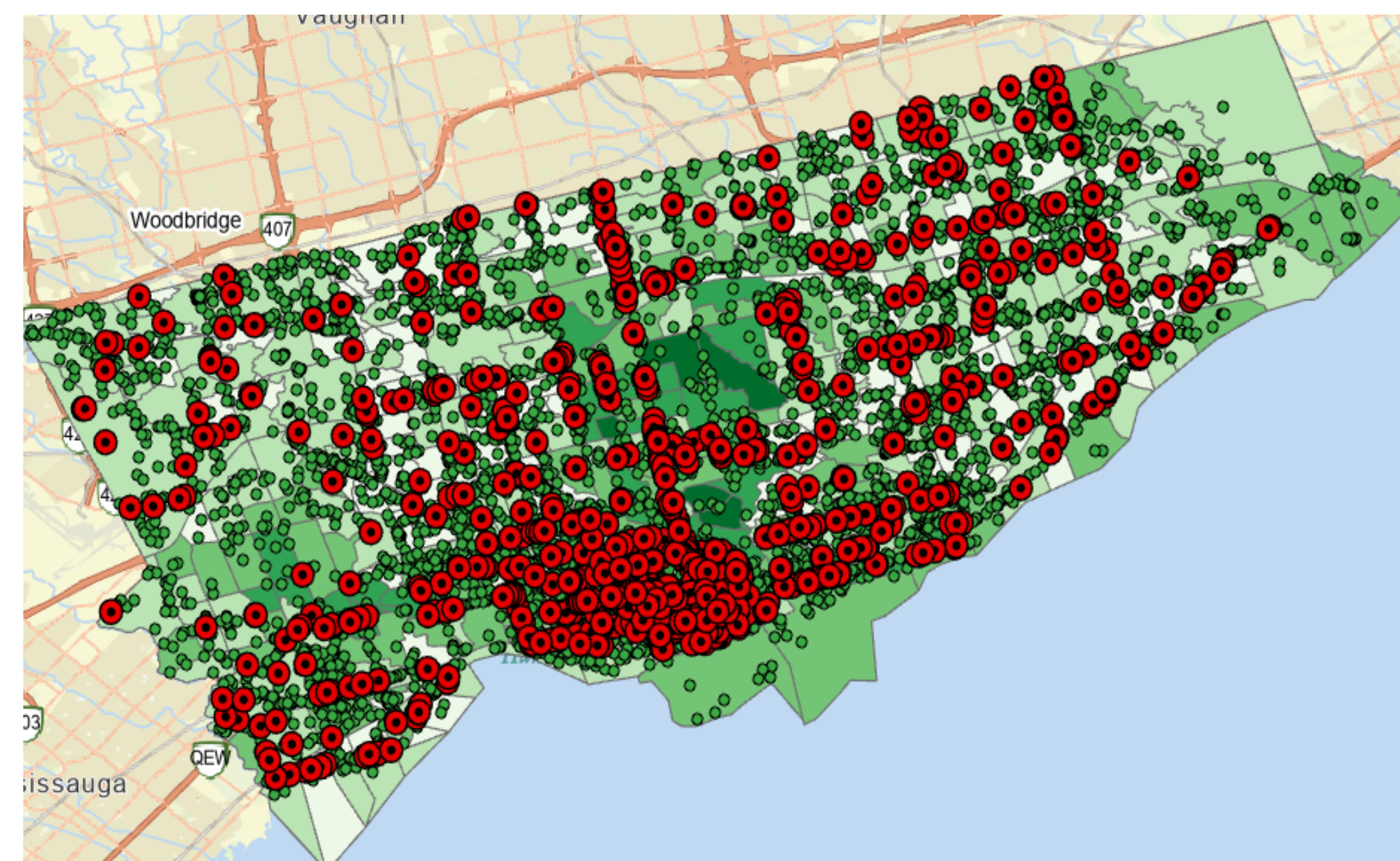
1. Restaurants have a responsibility of mitigating risks of allergic reactions<sup>4</sup>
  - **Verbally:** Communicating risks with customers to facilitate safety and trust
  - **Non-verbally:** Identifying food allergens on the menu to avoid exposure
2. Food allergy prevention is financially costly for restaurants<sup>5</sup>
  - **Production-costs:** Allergen-free food production requires an increased supply of kitchen appliances, a separate allergy-free zone, and increased cleaning
  - **Employee Training:** Training employees on cross-contact prevention costs money and time
3. Neighbourhoods with low Socio-economic status (SES) and a higher proportion of racialized individuals have smaller independent food establishments<sup>6</sup>
  - **Less resources and equipment**
  - **Subject to more public health inspections**
  - **More prone to foodborne illnesses**



## Methods

### 1. Food Allergy Accommodation Assessment

- Took a large random sample of restaurants from Toronto city (n=1000) using Dine safe data and visualized it using ArcGIS



Map: 1,000 sampled restaurants visualized across Toronto

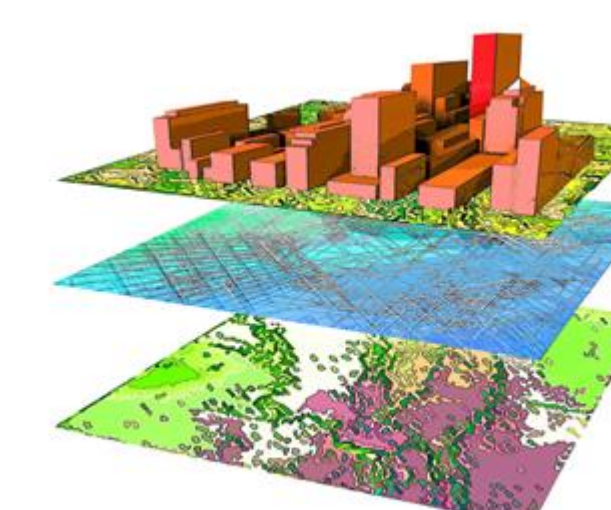
- Assessed online using a checklist
- Restaurant characteristics**
- Cuisine type
  - Google rating
  - Cost indicator

### Menu Characteristics

- Menu symbols labelled for the 7 major allergens
- Allergen disclaimer
- Separate allergen menu

### 2. Neighbourhood SES indicators

- Regression analysis to look at the association between neighbourhood SES features and level of food allergy accommodation



## Results

### Restaurant Characteristics

#### Most common cuisine types:

- East Asian (25%)
- Southern European (16%)

**Google Rating:** ★★★★★

- 4.3 median rating

**Cost Indicator:** \$\$

- \$\$ mode



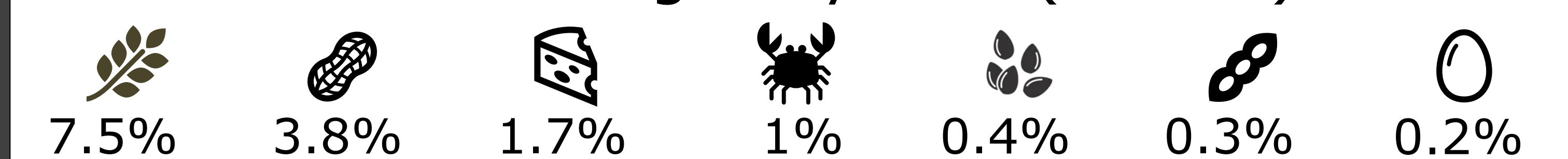
3.9 ★★★★★ 3,388 Google reviews

\$\$ · South Indian restaurant

### Menu Characteristics

#### Menu Symbols

- Only 10% of the restaurants featured one or more allergen symbol (n=100)



- 8% had no menu symbols but offered gluten-free options

#### Allergen Disclaimer:

- 16% of restaurants featured an allergen disclaimer on their menu (n=158)- focusing on gluten and peanuts



#### Separate Allergen Menu/Chart:

- 6 restaurants had a separate allergen menu
- 4 restaurants had a separate allergen chart

## Conclusion

- Results indicate a lack of food allergy accommodation in Toronto's non-chain restaurants
- Data can enable government and food allergy outreach organizations to
  1. Increase food allergen training for employees
  2. Enhance menu food allergen labelling



References